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27th November, 1959

COCOM Doc. 3715.65/1 B

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS

ON

ITEM 1565 - COMPUTERS, ELECTRONIC

12th and 17th November, 1959

Present: Belgium (Luxembourg), Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States.

References: COCOM Docs. 3700.1 and .5, 3715.00/1 and 3750, W.P. 1565/1, 2 and 3.

1. The COMMITTEE studied Item 1565 in the light of the redefinition proposals submitted by the United Kingdom and United States Delegations.

2. The UNITED KINGDOM Delegation had proposed the following new definition:

"Digital computers and specialised parts therefor:

except such computers and parts for which, either:

(i) a patent application was made more than two years previously; or

(ii) the technical features were published more than two years previously."

3. The UNITED KINGDOM Delegate stated that this proposal aimed at solving two problems. First, to eliminate differences in interpretation to which the current definition had given rise in some countries. Secondly, to ensure that the embargo should cover the equipment it was intended to cover. The Delegate recognised the need to protect the most recent developments in the field of electronic computers. This was why his Delegation had put forward the idea of a time limit, which had been set at two years. To that extent the United Kingdom proposal widened the embargo, since the proposed wording covered all types of computers. At the same time it narrowed it in as much as it freed the older types. The Delegate added that his Delegation would give sympathetic consideration to the United States proposal. They had themselves considered the possibility of submitting a redefinition proposal based on the technical characteristics of this equipment. The task had appeared so difficult that they had abandoned it. They would ask for nothing better, however, than to find merit in the United States proposal.

4. The UNITED STATES Delegation had proposed the following new definition:

"Computers, electronic, as follows:

(a) Analogue types;

(b) Digital types having any of the following characteristics:

(1) Employing a magnetic core memory;

(2) Having a minimum memory access time of 20 microseconds or less;

(3) Incorporating transistorized logic and arithmetic units;

(4) Employing input-output devices capable of speeds in excess of 200 words per minute or 150 bauds, whichever is less;

(c) Specially designed components and accessories for the computers listed above."

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5. The UNITED STATES Delegate said that his Government wished to find a more precise definition which would eliminate ambiguity in interpretation which had troubled the United States authorities as well as those of other countries. Consequently, the United States had formulated a redefinition which they believed freed the relatively less strategic computers but continued embargo of the relatively more strategic types. The proposed wording covered both electronic analogue and digital computers. He pointed out that nearly any digital computer could be used for both commercial and strategic purposes and that the intent of the United States proposal was to free only those types which were relatively less suited to strategic applications than others. In view of the extraordinarily great importance of electronic computers to modern warfare and scientific strategic research and in view of the meagreness of Soviet computer resources, the United States Delegate said that his Government attached great importance to continuation of the embargo and to reaching a reasonable solution to prevent interpretative difficulties.

6. On the 20th November, the UNITED STATES Delegation submitted in COCOM Document No. 3715.65/2 a Memorandum setting forth their views on the strategic importance of computers and the rationale of their redefinition proposal.

7. The FRENCH Delegate recalled that his Delegation wished to exclude from embargo analogue computers which it would be impossible to put to strictly military or industrial uses.

8. The COMMITTEE were unable to study Item 1565 more thoroughly, and agreed to examine it again during the second round of their review of the Electronics Category.

CONCLUSION: The COMMITTEE, noting that they were unable to reach agreement on Item 1565, agreed to resume its study during the second round of the review.

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